The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

**Schedules: White House and Congress**

**WHITE HOUSE**

- 10am: President Biden, VP Kamala Harris and their spouses watch Virtual Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service
- 12:45pm: Biden, Harris receive presidential daily brief
- 2pm: Biden delivers remarks on administration’s Covid-19 response
  - NOTE: Biden expected to sign executive actions to “move aggressively to change the course of the Covid-19 crisis and safely re-open schools and businesses, including by taking action to mitigate spread through expanding testing, protecting workers, and establishing clear public health standards,” according to a memo by Ron Klain, the White House chief of staff
- 2:25pm: Biden, Harris receive briefing from members of Covid-19 team
- 4pm: White House Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds briefing

**CONGRESS**

- House meets at 2pm, plans to vote on granting a waiver that would allow Lloyd Austin to serve as Biden’s secretary of defense
- Senate meets at noon; no votes scheduled

**Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News**

- **Bloomberg Government: Caps on Corporate Lobbying:** Biden banned his senior advisers from accepting lucrative bonuses from their former employers for joining his administration in an effort to curb efforts by companies to influence the White House’s agenda. Biden signed an executive order yesterday that also bans top administration appointees from lobbying senior White House staff after they leave the U.S. government.

- **The Washington Post: Biden's First Executive Orders Will Reverse Trump Policies:** The most pressing of his priorities are measures to combat the deadly coronavirus pandemic. Biden signed executive actions to require masks on all federal grounds and asked agencies to extend moratoriums on evictions and on federal student loan payments. He urged Americans to don face coverings for 100 days, while reviving a global health unit in the National Security Council — allowed to go dormant during the Trump administration — to oversee pandemic preparedness and response. Biden also began to reverse several steps taken by President Donald Trump by embracing the World Health Organization, revoking the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline and rejoining the Paris climate agreement.

- **Modern Healthcare: Elizabeth Richter Will Serve As Acting CMS Administrator:** Elizabeth Richter will serve as acting administrator for CMS, according to the agency's website on Wednesday. The career civil servant previously served as CMS' deputy center
director, leading policy development and operations management for Medicare's fee-for-service program since 2007. She has held several roles focused on Medicare payment issues since she joined the agency in 1990. Healthcare insiders have waited with bated breath for Biden to announce his pick for CMS administrator. But he hasn't done it yet, even though the agency's Medicare and Medicaid programs cover nearly 1 in 3 Americans. CMS' budget is more than $1 trillion, accounting for over a quarter of federal spending.

• **Bloomberg Government: HHS on ‘Different Page’ About How to Curb Drug Prices:** Biden enters the presidency with at least a dozen lawsuits waiting over Trump-era moves to lower drug prices, an issue the new administration will likely tackle in its own way. The Department of Health and Human Services under Biden inherits challenges to rules that tie drug reimbursement to cheaper foreign drug prices and allow medication imports from Canada. It also faces complaints over Trump’s push for drugmakers to ship discounted drugs bought by low-income health centers to commercial contract pharmacies.

• **The New York Times: Biden Restores Ties With The World Health Organization That Were Cut By Trump:** Seeking to unify the global response to the coronavirus, President Biden on his first day in office retracted a decision by the Trump administration to withdraw from the World Health Organization. The Biden administration announced that Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert, would be the head of the U.S. delegation to the agency’s executive board. Dr. Fauci will begin that role with a meeting this week.

• **Bloomberg Government: Health Rules Subject to Biden 60-Day Pause:** From insulin to life-saving medical devices to last-ditch efforts to protect premature infants (including those from “live birth” abortions), multiple rules posted by the Health and Human Services Department in the final days of Trump’s presidency are subject to a 60-day pause. A memo circulated yesterday by White House Chief of Staff Ronald Klain said all rules, guidances, or other agency actions that didn’t take effect prior to noon that day—the official handover time from Trump to Biden—will be subject to review by the new administration before they can take effect.
  o If the previous administration’s actions raise questions of “fact, law, or policy,” the designated officials now leading the agencies can further delay effective dates and consult with the Office of Management and Budget about other actions. The agencies can also open comment periods on those actions.

• **Bloomberg Government: Biden Stimulus Gets Skeptical GOP Response:** Biden’s proposed $1.9 trillion pandemic relief plan got a skeptical response from two Senate Republicans whose backing he’d likely need for quick congressional passage. Sen. Mitt Romney (Utah), a member of the bipartisan group of senators who helped propel talks on the $900 billion stimulus enacted in December, said shortly after Biden’s inauguration he thinks it’s too early for Congress to act again. “I am not looking for a new program in the immediate future,” he said.
  o Another member of that group said to reporters she doesn’t disagree with Biden that another round of help for an ailing economy is necessary. Still, she said, it’s going to take some time to consider it. “The ink is just barely dry on the $900 billion, and what the president is proposing is significant, $1.9 trillion,” said Sen. Lisa Murkowski (Alaska). “It’s going to require I think a fair amount of of debate and consideration.”
• **Bloomberg Government: Norris Cochran Named Acting HHS Head**: Norris Cochran, HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary of Budget, will serve as acting secretary of the Health and Human Services Department while the new administration works to turn around a coronavirus response it argues is inadequate, Biden’s administration said yesterday. Cochran will serve until Biden’s nominee, California’s attorney general, Xavier Becerra, is confirmed by the Senate. Confirmation is likely, although it’ll likely take some time.

• **Politico: Surgeon General To Step Down As Biden Requested**: [President] Joe Biden has asked for the resignation of Surgeon General Jerome Adams, bringing the tenure of the nation’s top doctor to an abrupt end as Biden looks to reboot the federal government’s pandemic response. Adams confirmed his plans to step down in a tweet on Wednesday morning, calling it the “honor of my life to serve this Nation.”

• **Stat: Hospitals Mark Up Some Medicines By 250% On Average**: As Americans grapple with the rising cost of prescription drugs, a new analysis found that some hospitals mark up prices on more than two dozen medicines by an average of 250%, underscoring the incentives to use more expensive brand-name treatments than lower-cost biosimilars. For instance, hospitals charged more than five times the purchase price for Epogen, which is used to treat anemia caused by chronic kidney disease for patients on dialysis.